Jackson 'doubts' Ray actually killed King

PETROS, Tenn. (UPI) — Civil rights Leader Rev. Jesse Jackson, who was with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. when he was shot to death 10 years ago in Memphis, met behind bars with James Earl Ray Thursday and later said he had "profound doubt" the convicted assassin actually killed King.

"I am convinced that he was involved but was not alone," said Jackson. "It may very well be that Mr. Ray was a diversion in a grander scheme."

In another development in the Ray case, Dr. Ralph Abernathy, another civil rights leader who was with King on the day of the assassination, told the Memphis Commerical-Appeal that he would testify at a congressional hearing next week that he believes the FBI and Memphis police helped "conspirators" spirit Ray from Memphis after the April 4, 1968, shooting.

"If given a new trial, he (Ray) would reveal the names and information that would lead the police to the real killers of Martin Luther King," Abernathy said.

Ray, serving a 99-year term at Brushy Mountain State Prison for the King slaying, initially pleaded guilty to the crime, but has since changed his story and contends he was not the trigger man.

He has asked Jackson and Abernathy, who succeeded King as head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, to help him win a new trial.

"Because we are convinced that a trial would be in the national interest, we called the Justice Department from the penitentiary and I talked to Benjamin Civiletti and we will try to meet with Mr. Bell (Atty. Gen. Griffin Bell) to challenged the Justice Department's position (on the case)," Jackson said.

"We asked him (Ray) point blank if he killed Dr. King," Jackson related. "He said he did not kill King."